



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOREST SERVICE

NEWS RELEASE

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DELAWARE SENDS CREW TO CALIFORNIA TO ASSIST WITH NATIONAL WILDFIRE EFFORT

A 20-member wildfire crew from Delaware is helping battle severe wildfires in California that have exhausted local manpower and resources there. Delaware's team is currently assigned to the Iron Complex Fire, located near Junction City, California. This is Delaware's first-ever trip to California to fight wildfires.

According to the National Incident Management Report, <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf>, the Iron Complex Fire is comprised of 6 fires that have already burned over 25,000 acres near the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, one mile north of Junction City, CA. The fire involves heavy timber, brush and grass. The fire is threatening the communities of Hawkins Bar, Trinity Village, Big Bar and Big Flat. Evacuations are in effect, with temporary road closures and restricted traffic flow on nearby Highway 299.

Michael A. Valenti, Delaware's Assistant State Forester, is commanding the crew that departed early on July 6, 2008 from Blackbird State Forest in Smyrna, Delaware. The crew includes veterans from the Delaware Forest Service, Delaware's Division of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, local firefighters and paramedics, and private volunteers certified to fight wildfires.

With the National Preparedness Level already peaking at 5 on a 5-point scale, this summer is threatening to continue a dangerous wildfire activity. Nationwide, federal authorities have already reported 36,656 fires involving almost 2.2 million acres of July 1, 2008. In the past decade, a typical year produces an average of 41,715 fires burning a total of 1.9 million acres. This year's total of large fires has greatly increased the demand for certified wildfire personnel.

James Dowd, a veteran firefighter with the Delaware Forest Service who helps train crew members, is also serving as an equipment operator at the base camp in Redding, California.

"We plan to follow it up with another team of firefighters in roughly two weeks," says Valenti. "It's important that we join the national effort to get these large fires under control."

Delaware has been fielding a crew almost every year since 1998. In addition to battling wildfires, the team is occasionally used for "all-hazard emergencies," as in a 2004 hurricane relief effort in Florida.

Crew Members:

<u>First</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Eric	Bugglin-Borer	Dover	First-time service with the wildfire crew*
Matthew	Chamberlain	Newark	DNREC, Air Quality

John	Cirafici	Milford	First-time service with the wildfire crew*
Matthew	Dotterer	Milton	Fire Co. 85
Glen	Gladders	Dover	Delaware Forest Service
Todd	Gsell	Townsend	Delaware Forest Service
Matthew	Hansen	Millsboro	Delaware Forest Service
Adam	Keever	Newark	DNREC, Parks & Recreation
Thomas	Kneavel	Newark	DNREC, Parks & Recreation
Michael	Krumrine	Magnolia	DNREC, Parks & Recreation
Robert	Polen	Avondale, PA	PA. Fire Co. 25
Andrew	Rawling	Newark	DNREC, Parks & Recreation
Jonathan	Richardville	Wilmington	Claymont, Station 13
Kevin	Shaffer	Downingtown, PA	PA. Fire Co. 49
Todd	Shaffer	Downingtown, PA	PA. Fire Co. 49
Monica	Testa	Wilmington	Mill Creek, Station 21
Samual	Topper	Dewey Beach	Delaware Forest Service
Daryl	Trotman	Ellendale	Delaware Forest Service, Ellendale Co. 75
Michael	Valenti	Dover	Delaware Forest Service, Crew Leader
Scott	Veasey	Millsboro	Millsboro Fire Co. 83